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Collaborative Art Practices in HE: Mapping and Developing Pedagogical Models

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Collaborative Art Practices in HE

Mapping and Developing Pedagogical Models

Overview:

This document provides a snapshot of current practices in the teaching of collaboration in Higher Education in the performing and creative arts as it occurs in the HEIs that responded to a survey carried out in 2010.

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10 things to think about before teaching collaboration¹

1. Is the experience of forming a group part of the formal learning (and is it assessed)?
2. Will 'collaborating' be taught or facilitated (or both or neither)?
3. What are the skills of the collaborator that students will gain (that aren't the skills of any other creative practitioner)?
4. How will the group cope with Frank Sinatra? (Where *my way* is the only way).
5. And how will they avoid 'Fatal Niceness'? (The bland result of avoiding conflict).
6. Should students from one discipline know what to expect from students in another discipline *before* they 'collide'?
7. When is it best to stop talking and start doing, when is it best to stop doing and have a conversation about it?
8. How is an individual mark to be attributed in the midst of joint authorship? (NOTE: every respondent in this report that assesses (summatively) includes an element of sole authorship – are we all avoiding the issue here?).
9. And how are students to be reassured that their assessment will be fair? (Not 'dragged down' by others or 'wrongly' assessed by staff from the 'other' discipline). Or should students not be reassured – why should collaboration be fair?
10. Does the collaboration have to be given a mark at all?

¹ Some thoughts motivated by comments and patterns emerging from the report.

Collaborative Art Practices in HE: Mapping and Developing Pedagogical Models

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Section 1

Introduction

This document has been designed to provide a snapshot of current practice in the teaching of collaboration in Higher Education in the performing and creative arts. This study aims to draw on experience and views of colleagues who are enthused and proactive in facilitating this kind of work in their own departments; in particular to offer a report that provides an insight into issues and challenges surrounding module design and delivery. This document presents themes of interest and concern surrounding the complexities of co-creating in Higher Education, with a focus on how tutors are designing modules, facilitating and teaching collaboration, and then further discussion on the salient themes of concern and interest.

The report has been generated by three collaborating academics and scrutinized further by members of the academic community who participated in a symposium in September 2010. We hope that it will provide a point of departure for those interested in introducing or developing creative collaboration in their curriculum whilst helping to establish a network for further dialogue around pedagogical investigations of creative collaboration.

Collecting data on interdisciplinary collaboration in HE

The report comes out of the results of a survey distributed via Survey Monkey through a range of JISC lists, academic networks and targeted emails. The survey questions were designed to obtain some specific and participant focused information about the way that creative collaboration is delivered in institutions. It collected information about the module design, how student groups are created and seen to be working, teaching content and staff views of collaborative practice as follows:

About the module

- Module Title
- Module Aims
- Learning outcomes
- Who is assessed
- How students are assessed
- Assessment weighting

On working in groups

- If students collaborate within a discipline or with other disciplines
- What disciplines are involved
- How students are organised into groups
- How students appear to be working (i.e. generating ideas jointly or working separately)

Teaching

- What kind of content is taught
- Example of a session

Further qualitative information was obtained on staff views of 'best' practice

- What constitutes 'best' practice
- What factors contribute to 'best' practice being achieved
- What factors appear to hinder 'best' practice.

The survey received 48 responses, within that 26 responses were complete and it is these that are included in this report. They are presented anonymously within the data presentation however we have provided a full list of the institutions and faculties are represented in this data set (see below).

Participating institutions and schools/faculties

Anglia Ruskin University	Music and Performing Arts
Bath Spa University	Music
University of Chester	Performing Arts (twice)
De Montfort University	Digital and Performing arts (twice)
De Montfort University	Humanities
Edith Cowan University	Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts
University of Huddersfield	Drama (twice)
University of Hull	School of Arts and New Media (Twice)
Kingston University	Fine Art and Digital Media
University of Northampton	Division of Performance studies
Queen's University Belfast	Drama Studies
Queen's University Belfast	Centre for Excellence in the Creative and Performing Arts
Regent's College	Humanities
University of Sheffield	English
Staffordshire University	Faculty of Art, Media and Design
University Campus Suffolk	School of Arts and Humanities
University of Surrey	Dance, Film and Theatre
Teesside University	Arts and Media
University of Ulster	School of Creative Arts
University of Winchester	Arts (Drama)
York St John University	Arts (twice)

The second phase of data collection involved participant scrutiny of the findings summarised in this survey. This was conducted in the form of a symposium which took place on September 17th 2010 at the Scarborough Campus of Hull University. Delegates were sent the findings in advanced and feedback provided at this event was used to revise, develop and extend the information contained in the survey report.

Section 2

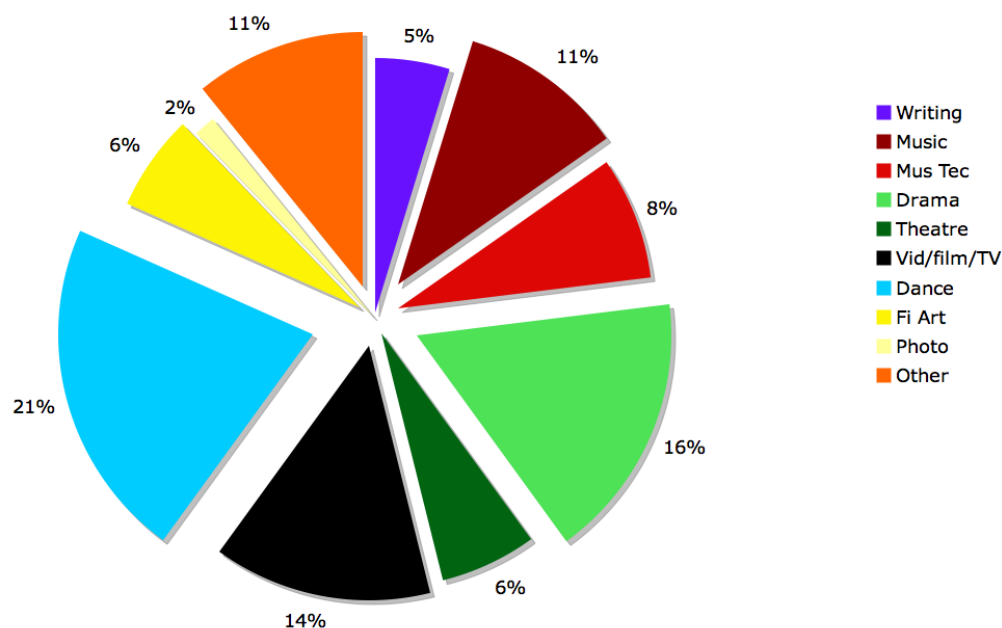
Survey data and quantitative analysis

A closer look at the survey data

The survey was designed to capture information about courses currently being delivered in a range of HEIs. Participants were invited to submit the following basic information about modules:

- the disciplines represented
- module titles
- the academic level participating students are at when they take the module

The data from these institutions represents the range of disciplines presented in the chart illustration below, also showing their relative presence in the sample of collaborative practice captured. The most prevalent are Theatre, Dance then Music.



Of these modules the student level was unclear for 6 submissions however there was a wide spread practice at all levels.

1st year modules: 4

2nd year modules: 7

3rd year modules: 5

Postgraduate modules: 3

The following table illustrates both the range of module titles as well as the balance of inter and intra disciplinary involvement.

Title of module	Disciplines	
	single (1)	multiple (2 to 5)
Devising with Performance and Digital Arts		Music, Music Tech, Drama, Video & Film, Dance
Choreographic Project	Dance	
Collaborative Processes in Dance Making		Dance, Music, Fine Art
Collaborative Writing		Writing, Music, Dance, Photo, Other (i.e. Chemistry & Ornithology)
Making Texts	Theatre	
Body in Performance	Dance	
LINK Dance Co.	Dance	
Quadruple Group Project		Dance, Physical Theatre
Skills and Techniques		Video & Film, other live recorded media.
Performance Technologies		Drama, Dance
Introduction to Acting	Theatre	
Collaborative Practice	Theatre	
Dramaturgy and Live Performance	Theatre	
Multi-Disciplinary Performance Techniques		Drama, Theatre, Video & Film
Core Training		Drama, Dance, other (musicality and physical theatre)
Choreography for Performance		Music composer & choreographer
Art, Music Performance		Music, Music Tech, Drama, Fine Art
Image, movement, performance: choreography for live and screen dance	Dance	
Architecting the body		Video & Film, Dance, Architecture
Creative Forum 2		Writing, Music, Drama, Video & Film
Collaborative Practice	Fine Art	
Adventures in Interdisciplinarity		Writing, Music composition, Sonic arts, Drama, Video & Film
Documentary Film Practice		Music, Music Technology, Video & Film
Interdisciplinary Project	*Video & Film, Fine art	
Performance on Screen		Music, Drama, Video & Film, Dance
Media Culture and Society		Theatre, Dance, Web design and Digital arts
	10	16

*(All Fine Art students on the same course)

Mindful of the core elements of a module specification document (the document that each degree course team submits for central validation) the survey collected quantitative information about:

- Module Aims
- Module learning outcomes
- Assessment type and weighting
- Whether all participants are assessed

The data collected on module aims and module learning outcomes was rich and varied. (Trends will be looked at later in this document).

Assessment type and weighting

The survey asked tutors to indicate what kind of work is assessed and what the relative weighting is also. The types of assessment are indicated on the right hand side below. Some assessments were presented without any weighting so these were not included in the data below. The results do not account for formative work that is not formally (summative) assessed.

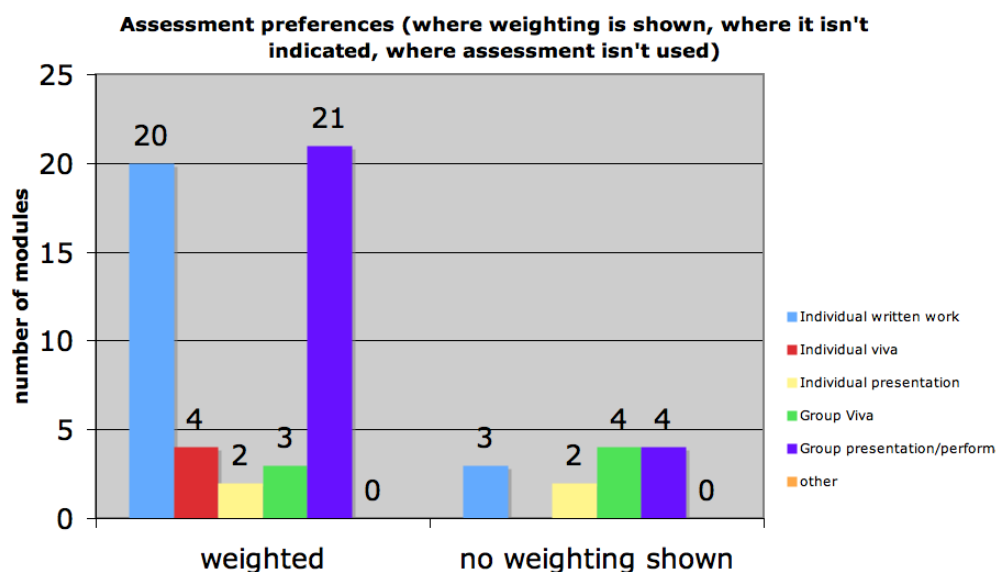
4/26 modules include individual viva voce

2/26 modules include an individual presentation and in one case this is prefaced by group work.

3/26 involved a group viva voce

20/26 included an individual written component

21/26 included a group presentation/performance

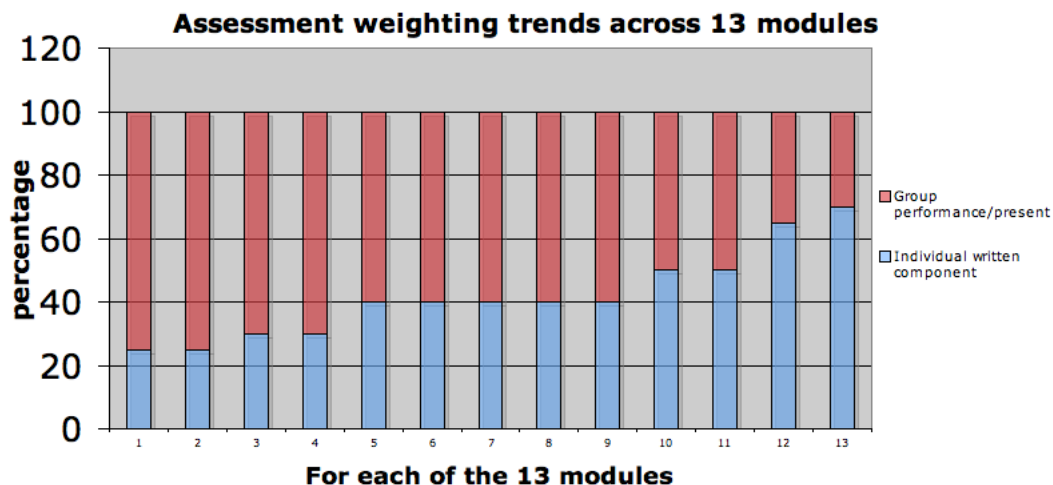


Shows if assessment was used where weighted, weighting not indicated, assessment not used

Of these 26 modules, 18 included both an individual written report **and** a group presentation. This is significant. Of those 18, 13 modules included no other form of assessment indicating that

half of the modules submitted in this survey assess their students purely through two components: an individual written report and a group presentation/performance.

Looking more closely at this we observed further clustering. Two of the modules weighted each of these components equally at 50%, and two modules weighted the individual component more heavily. Nine of these modules weighted the individual component at 40% or less.

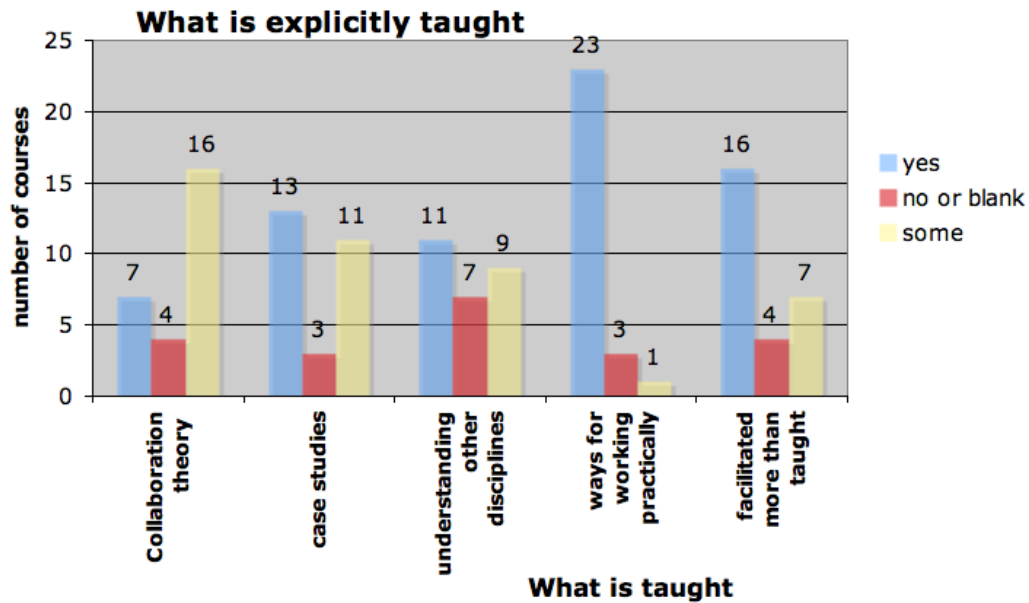


This diagram illustrates each of the modules across the x axis and the balance of weighting vertically on the y axis. Notice that 5 modules are presented with a 40%/60% weighting. The two modules with greater emphasis on the individual written component are: Documentary Film Practice and Media, Culture and Society (within Digital Media and Theatre Performance programmes).

Further information was collected about how the modules are taught.

There may be a range of strategies for developing students' collaborative knowledge. The survey asked participants to indicate if any of the following are included explicitly to a greater or lesser extent:

- Theory of group working/collaborating
- Case studies of collaborators
- Understanding of other participating disciplines (note 10 modules include one discipline)
- Ways of working practically (practical methodologies)
- 'Facilitated' rather than 'taught'



The results showed that all of these strategies were used to some degree on all of the courses. The most prominent approach is indicated here with 23/26 modules explicitly teaching ways of working practically. There is also a notable preference for facilitating rather than teaching. Clearly most courses are delivering collaboration theory and case study examples to some extent and the least popular (though still widely used) approach is with teaching students about the other disciplines.

Looking at the types of courses, years and numbers of disciplines involved, there was no clear pattern for preference in this area beyond the broad trend illustrated above.

How collaborative groups are selected and modes of working observed by staff

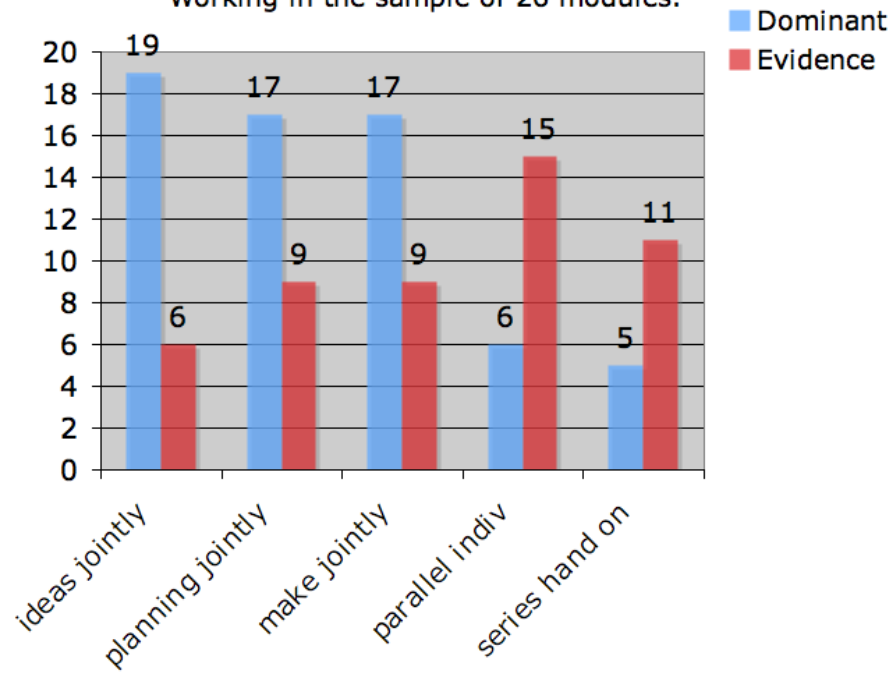
8/26 modules involve students selecting their groups and another 8/26 involve the staff working closely with the students, often through various processes, to select their groups *[provide more examples on notable practices here]*. In 5/26 modules a formal process is employed to help staff construct groups.

The survey also asked for information about the type of collaborative working patterns observed.

- making ideas jointly
- planning the work jointly
- making the work itself jointly
- working individually in parallel
- working in series and handing over

The results illustrate a trend in what staff observed with the most dominant practices seen to be the first three categories. There is a notable drop in individual practices as one might expect however 21/26 do evidence some individual parallel process and 16/26 some series and handing on happening. It shows that students are working in a range of solo and joint contexts and it also shows there is considerable joint work occurring.

A broad count of Dominant and Evidenced Ways of Working in the sample of 26 modules.



Section 3

Strategies for teaching collaborative practice

Overview

This section aims to briefly address strategies of teaching collaborative practices although, as demonstrated in the survey's results, 'teaching collaboration' relies mostly on a variety of single-discipline approaches or subject area knowledge to 'collaboration'. Responses allow us to identify a number of sustained principles and modes of working which are inherently applied to interdisciplinary collaborative practice. The report draws extensively on the qualitative information (comments from experienced lecturers) presented in the survey.

General principles (skills for collaborative practice)

Many comments discuss the significance of a range of general principles and skills to be acquired which are considered as essential means to students *and* tutors through any combination of collaborative working process and delivery (teaching, learning or creating).

As one respondent notes, the tutors must have an understanding of, and capacity in, interdisciplinary collaborative practice alongside their own discipline. A developing experience of teaching collaborative modules and working creatively as a practitioner should help the tutor to acquire transferable personal skills to students. However the process can be 'tortuous' when a tutor has to facilitate a module involving multiple disciplines on their own, particularly if that tutor does not consider him/herself sufficiently equipped to be 'adaptable to the wide range of student needs and aspirations'. The trend for most respondents is that lecturers teach 'collaboratively' (i.e. more than one member of staff on the module) where modules involve more than one discipline, and a range of fundamental skills were commonly recognised by colleagues in the survey. They are listed below, not in any particular order although they are all equally crucial to a comprehensible engagement in collaborative practice.

- **Observation: seeing/listening/watching/touching**

Observation includes the capacity of 'seeing', 'listening', 'watching' and 'touching'. Those senses, whether the collaborators have or do not have full aptitude of them, might be developed through a series of practical exercises (though there is little data on the types of exercises to offer). Respondents seem also to have used the word 'observation' in a wider and non-literal sense. It generally includes the ability to observe the strategies of students' collaborative process and reflect upon them.

- **Trust**

Trust is viewed largely as an essential factor towards any collaborative work. It is related to the build up a mutual respect between collaborators (students and students, students and tutors, tutors and tutors) in the artistic choices or shared goals, and generally at any point in the process and delivery. It naturally allows the promotion of cooperation and creativity in the group.

- **Communication**

Knowing how to communicate between collaborators at any stage in the devising process is obviously another important skill in collaborative practice. This includes the ability to be opened up to ideas and in the various ways of expressing ideas throughout an equal and shared development of the process. Discussion/conversation is consequently viewed as a key-factor to successful collaboration. One respondent mentions that expressing ideas is concerned with the question of 'how students speak to each other', but also 'how they speak to students' own particular practice'. It is therefore associated to the openness in the understanding of other disciplines in addition to stress on the value in each individual contribution.

Of the various ways of considering communication for collaborative practice, respondents have mentioned the following:

- Regular **feedback** (amongst group members, the groups and from tutors) seems to be a fruitful approach to the atypical exploration of the collaborative practice. This means 'to analyse and evaluate own work and the work of others';
- **Reflective critical** approach to the collaborative process (explorative and research activities, goals, methodologies, etc.) which discusses the 'purpose and function of a collaborative creative work';
- **Reflective discussion** upon the acquisition of skills and techniques and personal practice;
- **Conversation** to solve a point of personal clash or discordance within the group or to debate specific point of concern (or to simply hold a 'conversation' on the event);
- Use of **video** as a reflective tool;
- **Understanding** of collaborative partners' requirements instead of having one general answer for everyone.

- **Teamwork**

Teamwork skills are related to the ability to work 'effectively and responsibly as a member of a production team'. This implies a willingness to work with collaborative partners and to be committed as a team to the collaborative project. It implies the need to generate good organisation in the team such as sharing and accepting a good timeframe for each individual and the whole group at any stage in the project. Working together outside contact time with tutors is viewed as a 'normal' practice in collaborative work. A promising work (though this is not confined to collaboration) will primarily depend upon the students' investment, enthusiasm and commitment in the project.

It is often advised that collaborators must agree on a schedule for rehearsals, production meetings and any other related activities to the composition of the collaborative project. One respondent notes that 'failure of any individual to do his/her job will NOT destroy the collaboration, but will leave that student fully exposed as someone who has not done the necessary work'. We might say that it is not always straightforward for the tutor to establish the degree of commitment of each student in a collaborative project unless an individual has completely disappeared from the group. It is therefore 'useful to ensure clarity of individual task

and collective task - and how they intersect' as well as making sure a clear assessment method 'that allows for varying marks with the collaborative group' is in place.

It is finally noted by one respondent that 'collaborative work between tutors help', which yet highlights the importance of considering these skills of collaboration to everybody (tutors and students).

- **Work creatively, imaginatively and critically**

Most comments indicate that key-factors to successful collaboration are linked to the ability of the students to engage creatively, imaginatively and critically with their project. We have survey data helping us to clarify how to develop these skills (see next sub-section and section 4).

- **Risk-taking**

One respondent writes that 'the value of cross-subject work is partly the challenge to subject conventions'. It is the act of challenging a student group to develop creative ideas outside of a set of secure working modes and relationships that is a key driver for cross-disciplinary collaboration. Many comments state that the role of the tutor is to encourage students to think differently, 'to push them beyond comfort zone' and outside of their single-discipline or usual pathway. Each collaborative creative work is by nature a unique journey, yet based on the ability to share individual skills, knowledge, techniques and experiences. It relies on the opportunity for the students to experiment with new creative perspectives and surely to try as much as possible to move away from fixed ideas and assumptions. Group' members must all accept the collaborative project as a unique way of managing 'the uncertainty and ambiguity of creative practice'. And it is very likely that collaborators who are inclined to take risks in their creative process, and to a certain extend in the delivery, will produce unexpected outcomes. Respondents recognise the benefits of risk-taking in any creative work, along with clear guidance and support by the tutors.

Existing models in teaching collaborative practice

This list of models is the result of respondents to the survey and is far from exhaustive but offers a sample of what is occurring in the teaching of collaborative practice at this time. Exercises to practice the skills of collaboration should aim to explore the relationships between at least two disciplines. The examples given by respondents are very often influenced by the specificities and vocabularies of their own discipline.

- **Use of practitioners' models**

A large number of professional practitioners' working models and pieces help tutors and students to acquire a greater insight of collaborative practice. Collaborative models are used to explore the techniques of a practitioner's work or more generally 'to bridge disciplines and demonstrates ways in which students can link together and explore contemporary issues'.

The study of particular models and techniques expand the critical and challenging approach to students' own collaborative practice. They also develop critical vocabulary to describe and analyse all forms of performance within a collaborative environment.

Many appropriate case studies do exist, and various respondents have mostly give examples of theatre or performance practitioners: Eugenio Barba, Blast Theory, Improbable, Complicité.

One respondent mentions the techniques of Tai Chi for learning how to steady a handheld camera. This exercise 'consisted of slow motion movement by performers who were shadowed by slow motion camera operators who were tasked to maintain the subject performer in the centre of the screen'.

- **Historical art movements**

As much as practitioners' models help to understand a particular perspective on collaboration, historical art movements are also used to explore conceptual frameworks.

For instance, one respondent has employed concepts used by the Futurist art movement in the creation of work. In the first workshop, students have 'considered ideas contained in the manifestoes about the creation of art, its aims and intentions, and also examine art works emerging from and/or responding to these ideas'. In the second workshop, students have continued 'to explore methodologies appropriate to the creation of an interdisciplinary futurist performance piece, specifically through the use of art as a stimulus'.

- **Improvisation**

Improvisation is recognised as a means to stimulate and to develop the creative process within a collaborative environment. It can take various forms, and depends mostly on the creative goals of the project. For instance, improvisation can be linked to 'a simple creative task, which requires making/devising, showing task, followed by discussion'.

- **The self and others**

It is clear that good inter-relationships between individual and group aspiration are crucial to develop a comprehensible understanding of the process. Collaboration is primarily a process of learning how to engage the self with others. For one respondent, each 'individual can then develop their psychophysical capacity' and to place it 'in the context of ensemble working'. Another respondent mentions that the notion of self is also 'related to theory (Lacan's mirror image)'.

'Strategies to deal with potential problems in collaboration'

- **'Ownership'**

Students have to learn how to 'own' their project, even though the ideas are not always initiated by the whole group but are the result of a compromise or agreement between its members. It is essential, for one respondent, 'to have an eye on the success of the overall work, rather than having an eye on the success of each part of the work'. It means that tutors should be able 'to channel the ego into the former rather than the latter'.

- **‘Decision-making’**

Ideally, the group should make decisions altogether. However, the survey results demonstrate that it is rarely the case in practice. One respondent identifies a need for a ‘mix of leaders and followers’, adding that they are ‘each important in different ways’. Another respondent even wrote that ‘a good collaboration requires a selfish focus on individual contributions’. It is worth affirming that collaboration should try as much as possible to give an equal voice to each individual in the group. If collaboration is viewed as a negotiable process, each member may adjust his/her role as followers or leaders (depending on the task) during the process.

- **‘Problem solving’**

Collaborators may disagree on the direction to take for the project, and this can create tensions between members in the group. Disagreement should be recognised as a ‘normal’ way to collaborate as long as each group member is willing both to try to solve the issue and to agree in finding a compromise. One respondent wrote more specifically that ‘disagreement can be creative as long as it is used to question assumptions’.

- **‘Moving through stages of work production’**

Such that each member of the group has a clear understanding of the different working processes of the project. Surely, as one respondent wrote, collaboration works better when the ensemble spends more time together.

To support a good timeframe for projects, respondents have suggested giving students mini-deadlines during the collaborative task or ‘the opportunity to have ‘mock’ collaborative events before the assessed event’.

- **‘Knowing what is best done together and best done apart’**

Finally, respondents have recognised the importance of achieving a balance between independent work that ‘encourages autonomy’ and collaborative work on ‘specific creative processes’. One comment mentions that ‘each subject brings its own territory of theory and terminology, and sometimes composers are best served by moving back into that territory and feeling free to have recourse to subject-specific language and theoretical ideas that other practitioners may not understand’.

Section 4

Concerns, issues, and advice on the pedagogy of collaborative practice

Overview

This section aims to list and briefly address points of interest, concerns, issues and 'best practice' relating to Collaborative Practice and its pedagogy coming out of the qualitative comments in the survey, and to act as an 'advice' list for those interested in this field.

Group Formation

- **Forming groups as a first point of (unnoticed) 'assessment'**

Of the various strategies given by respondents it is clear that this difficult task requires the *assessment* of individuals as to their suitability to combine with others to form groups. This 'assessment' does not form part of the module assessment (either as identified formative or summative assessment) but is evidently an important early part of the collaborative experience and of the learning, and (depending on how groups are formed) a key skill of the collaborator (that of how to choose the group).

'Staff knowledge of the cohort' is a recurring factor in decisions as to which students to place together, though it is less clear how this aspect (the impact of the 'team manager' who selects the team) is reflected upon in the student evaluation process. It might be noted then that the skill of 'choosing' collaborators is an important one but is by and large (in current practice at least) an implicit part of the learning experience rather than an explicit one.

One particular problem arises where, in cross-discipline groups, one subject has more students than the other or one subject 'domineers' over the other, which has implications in the forming of groups. Answers to this are along the lines of achieving the best balance from what is available.

- **Staff select groups at level 1**

Several respondents suggest that staff selection of students works well at Level 1 (first year Undergraduate), as one respondent put it 'they have enough to do just making the piece, never mind trying to form groups'.

Pros & Cons: This may omit the learning experience that other methods of group formation offer but as 'new' collaborators it bypasses that hurdle and allows students to focus on the collaborative making of the work.

- **Try different group formations in the process before choosing the 'best' method for the summative assessment.**

Several respondents note that different methods are tried earlier on in modules (random, psychometric testing *etc*) and that these experiences are used later to make the 'best' group selection ('who and what group size' for example) for the final summative assessment. It allows students to experience different ways in which groups can be formed and then evaluate their favoured model and choose that method for formulating the group that they work with for the 'mark' (where assessment is summative).

- **Use shared interests and ideas to combine groups**

Proposals, ideas, (which are 'blind reviewed' in one case) is one method by which students are brought together. Blind review allows prior knowledge of students (and hence assumptions) to be removed from the decision process. Personality is less a part of the formation process in this method and 'ideas' are used to join rather than attempting to balance 'people'.

Way of Working

- **Keep ways of working flexible**

A sense of 'what is needed at the time' comes through in responses, in particular there is a pattern where work is made jointly in group sessions but where individuals or discipline groups 'go off' to work on '*the script*' or '*the music*' for example. The dominant method is for 'work made jointly' but it is noted that it is 'not always successful and always with difficulty'. There is a strong sense that the group should be 'Immersed', 'together' and working practically, but also that working in parallel and then returning to the group has value.

Pros & Cons: Depending on the aims of the learning experience, allowing factions to 'go off' and return with material affords specific roles to be achieved (such as a piece of music or a script) and allows discipline specific roles to combine in 'complimentary' mode. It might on the other hand prevent students moving out of their 'comfort zone' and learning new performance languages, accepting other voices and skills into their contributions. Restricting separation may increase 'Integration' and the 'spontaneous collective response' and produce 'fresher' results but may lessen specific skills (e.g. less 'technically' skilled music or scripts). We might see here 'Integrative' and 'Complimentary' modes along a spectrum that students move along (in both directions) as the work is made, and the result (the product) will shift according to these movements.

- **Clarifying Roles**

Where a collaborative project requires specific complimentary roles and tasks it is 'beneficial' to have these set out clearly, conversely a different learning experience occurs if the groups have no such identified roles. In the former the options might be that roles are decided by staff or that students undergo the learning experience of deciding roles, in the latter mode students might

learn through the struggle to find order and work fluidly across roles and having to negotiate with others in a similarly non-defined position.

Teaching Collaboration

- **Not *teaching* collaboration but collaborating.**

It is evident that much of the delivery that can be considered 'taught' does not, by and large, include the study of collaboration (or at least of collaborative skills or theory) as part of the learning for collaborating students, rather that the theory and tasks often involve having to create with others. Collaboration here is experiential, whatever the skills sets for collaboration are, they are arrived at implicitly through the activity of joint making rather than being spelt out in the aims or outcomes.

One respondent notes that exercises are often the same as for other performance modules 'but with particular attention drawn to the role of sensory engagement' increasing the sensitivity of inter-subjective communication via the senses. This seems to directly address a particular skill needed for collaboration, or at least for 'working with others', making explicit what is most likely learned implicitly through most task based exercises. It might be then that drawing attention to this aspect (sensory engagement) focuses the student learning on a collaborative skill and might indeed be regarded as a technique for 'teaching' collaboration (or for teaching one specific skill therein).

- **Make time to stop 'doing' and reflect together**

Although reflection is still part of the 'doing' of collaboration to some extent it sets apart the physical creation of work and allows space to evaluate, make choices, make meaning, to articulate what was learnt, to decide on next steps. Although the formal assessments (with the exception of the group viva, which is uncommon) are more likely to require an individual written reflection, it is group discussion, conversation, joint critical reflection that are prominent parts of the pedagogy. Although we do not have data to compare to other performance modules, the regularity of appearance of this mode of learning suggests that group conversation following points of activity is important in collaborative work in particular. We might speculate that dialogue, communication, the making of and securing of shared understandings is central to the collaborative process; experienced improvisers may co-create without uttering a word outside the performance but we are concerned with pedagogy and students who normally would not have that embodied understanding or length of relationship with their collaborators. As such it would seem that taking time to reflect and converse is important for the development of the work, for the student understanding and for the shared understanding of the collaborators.

Aims and Outcomes

- **How the terms Collaboration, Devising, Interdisciplinary etc are used in the module documents.**

To some extent this is discipline specific, Theatre in particular uses the word 'Devise' not as a direct alternative for 'Collaborate' but that it would include joint authorship by the participants and the understanding of 'Devised Theatre' has currency, particularly that it is not of necessity multi- or inter-disciplinary. Dance programmes use all three as in 'conceive, devise, organise and deliver a choreographic work' and 'explore collaborative approaches to dance-making' and 'Examine inter-disciplinary and extraordinary examples of dance practice'.

'Inter-disciplinary' appears on modules often in conjunction with examples of disciplines that it might work across, combine or hybridise such as '...Inter-disciplinary perspective on performance, music and visual arts' or more generically '...adopt inter-disciplinary approaches to study, and engage with different theories or paradigms of knowledge'.

Other similar terms include **'team'** as in '...team working and problem solving skills', **'collective'** as in '...collective and interdisciplinary modes of working' and **'cooperate'** as in '...cooperative harmonious creative work practices', and **'hybrid'** and in '...a wide range of hybrid forms'.

Just to note that other known terms that have *not* occurred in the sample include: cross-discipline, multi-discipline, multi-media or inter-medial, all of which highlights that these terms are not of themselves necessarily collaborative, though it might also be argued that inter-disciplinarity might be achieved by the individual as could a devised piece, though by and large the terms (as used in this study) suggest multiple authors.

Key words: **Collaborate, Devise, Inter-disciplinary, Team, Collective, Cooperate, Hybrid.**

Assessment

- **The advantage of *not* assessing (summatively)**

Where students are not assessed summatively then they are free from the constraints of Learning Outcomes, or at least from the pressure of second guessing the examiner's preferences. Students wanting a good mark may do their best to demonstrate the LO's thus their goals are already directed from the outset, a starting point which may be at odds with aims that are concerned with exploration and unfamiliarity. The perceived emphasis may be on the 'demonstration of' pre-defined skills and knowledge rather than whatever learning might come out of the collaborative experience.

- **Where some collaborators are assessed and others are not (the fear of the unmarked)**

Problems can arise where there is a difference in the status of the group members, there may be a greater commitment to the project by participants that are assessed over those that are not assessed, and with this the perception that the non-assessed might drag down the mark of the assessed. In one case students are advised that the consequences of collaborating outside the group might be a 'worse' grade due to the different goals of the participants, the student might presumably then act on that information from the outset. For another 'it causes levels of stress for the students who fear their work might be undermined by others'. This is avoided in some instances where the collaboration (the joint 'thing') is not assessed but rather summative

assessment is by individual reflective journals. Another respondent notes that although there might be concern amongst students in regards to differing levels of commitment (and presumably worry over resultant grades) in actuality 'in our experience this hasn't been an issue' and the worry is not born out in practice.

- **Where students fear others will drag their marks down**

There is a genuine worry amongst students that 'their assessment may be affected by the calibre of their partner's work' (a universal concern of those engaged in group assessment) and 'Non-commitment by group members to the project' and 'collaborators not pulling their weight ('process loss')' which would be detrimental to the individual's mark (often the student's priority over the learning opportunity). Unsurprisingly then we see assessment as being split to take this into account (as described in the following).

- **Assessment weighting: more on the group practical or the individual reflection?**

Most modules have at least two modes of assessment and the balance between performance and written submission varies greatly (though there is generally heavier assessment weighting given to the group element) there are no responses that have 100% weighting for either. Implicit here is one of the key problems: collaboration is about joint-ness whereas assessment is (by dint of the need to award a degree classification for each student) about the individual. Perhaps the split of performance and individual written submission reflects the dual posture of 'the individual' and 'the group' that co-exists in collaborative practice, or possibly that the need for individuation of marks promotes the requirement to include a sole authored submission as part of the assessment (e.g. the written evaluative essay).

- **Using Peer assessment**

Peer assessment appears in a number of responses, it might be that this form makes explicit something that is occurring implicitly in each individual in their constant assessment of their collaborative partners. As with group formation where an 'assessment' is made of the potential partners, so here the individuals have to construct and articulate an assessment of their peers. There is no detail in the report as to whether this is done as a group or as individuals (i.e. is the assessor in the presence of the assessed, or know that their judgement will be known by them?), as there are likely to be different outcomes according to the method of peer assessment.

- **The subject discipline of the staff assessing can be perceived as an issue.**

Some concern is expressed as to the 'confidence' that students have in assessors according to their discipline. In one instance this is addressed by the lead assessor being of the discipline of the assessed student and the 'second' assessor being of the 'other' discipline. It is evident here that students may worry that they might not be marked 'fairly' if the assessors are not experienced in their discipline. The nature of the assessors then might be discussed with the students prior to assessment, though this might incur further problems as students steer their work to what they think particular assessors might want (a problem not confined to collaboration).

'Best' practice

- **Manage expectations (and approaching 'difference').**

Student written reflections that show 'an understanding of what to expect from collaborative partners' can contribute to a successful project. Assumed ways of working, particularly disciplinary approaches, may not be immediately compatible and as is noted in many aims and outcomes that understanding, negotiating and utilising difference are often key learning experiences of collaborative projects. One respondent notes a hindrance as 'a lack of understanding, knowledge and skill concerning shared creative practice from both a staff and student perspective'

- **Encourage shared ownership**

Building in 'negotiation' and equal sharing of workload helps 'each artist feel ownership over the process and the product'. 'Everyone has to start at the same place and be prepared to listen, share – give of themselves'. Depending on the level (and desired outcome) it can be beneficial to foster a sense of 'equal weighted-ness' in the input of the students, avoiding over domineering members taking over and other members giving up or seen as 'not pulling their weight'.

- **Use reflection as an iterative process**

Many comments discuss the benefits of students recording and evidencing the process with an emphasis on using this to reflect upon the process, and that the practice-reflection 'iterative loop' operates both to better the collaborative product and the written/oral reflection, thus different assessment methods might weight performance and written work differently but the reflection might come out in improved product (i.e. reflection leading to beneficial decisions/actions about the performance) and/or in individual written reflections. It is clear that the need for members to converse throughout the process is beneficial to individual and shared understanding that impacts upon the performance aspects

- **'Challenge' as a driving factor for collaboration**

As noted in the previous section the idea of 'Challenge' recurs throughout the survey comments: 'Challenging fixed assumptions', 'Pushing beyond the comfort zone', 'The challenge of subject conventions'. One response notes that 'a complacent group that doesn't challenge each other and tends towards 'going with the flow' hinders 'best' practice. There is something key here in the unknown and the variables of collaborative practice that is a driver for this pursuit within Higher Education. It might be a catalyst for students to understand that there are other ways of working beyond their own methods that are equally valid or might offer them new tools for working, it might challenge their own artistic canon (or that which is taught as an unchallenged paradigm), it might build confidence in dealing with the unusual and unexpected or even foster a desire to seek out uneasy territory for creative exploits, notwithstanding the obvious transferable life skill of dealing with people and difference.

- **Staff 'over directing' can be problematic**

Some respondents note that a 'heavily didactic' approach from the tutor can hinder creativity, another that 'staff channelling students in narrow artistic directions' is a hindrance, and another that 'the adherence to fixed ideas. the lack of flexibility (of both lecturer student.)' is problematic. The balance between staff input that is 'helpful' and staff input that is 'stifling' is marked out as an issue and, although solutions are not offered within the survey, notions of the need to preserve flexibility and respond to continual evaluation suggest that sensitivity and reflexive during the process is important.

- **The benefit of moving between 'I' and 'We' (Frank Sinatra v Fatal Niceness)**

As with the problem of assessing joint authorship in an assessment system that prioritises the individual, so the survey respondents note the tensions as well as the synergies between the 'I' and the 'We' in collaborative work. One response notes as a hindrance the 'Frank Sinatra syndrome - "I'll do it my way (or I won't do it at all)"' whilst at the opposite end we see that 'There is a fatal 'niceness' that enters in when people all try to take collective responsibility', and 'trying to please each other', and 'too much politeness' and respondents note the problems of both positions, an un-collaborative individual vision on one hand and a bland 'directionless morass' on the other. By and large the responses develop these positions to suggest that collective responsibility is founded on individuals 'taking responsibility for their own contribution and ensuring it is of excellent quality.' and that 'commitment' and 'enthusiasm' (as with most things) are crucial to project success.

A key skill the of the collaborator that might form part of a pedagogy then is the sensitivity and responsibility of this dual position where the student is simultaneously 'I' and 'We' and recognises the potential pitfalls as well as the creative possibilities of this position.

- **Less talk more action**

Although it is clear that talking, conversation and reflection throughout are important it is also clear that there needs to be something to talk about, i.e. some action that can be evaluated, understood etc, and respondents note that some members 'tend to time-waste and take time to get down to business', or that there might be 'too much talking, not enough doing'. One common teaching ploy then is to limit initial talks and encourage (force?) students to get on with the 'making' of material so that they have something to talk about.

Section 5

Pedagogical Models

Approaches to Collaborative Pedagogy: Oppositional Models

These binary pairing attempt to conceptualise what might be perceived as being at either end of a continuum of pedagogical approaches to collaboration and offer contrasting approaches to the learning experience. They are not set out to ascertain which one is best but rather to abstract and illuminate difference of approach. We might find the norms of collaborative practice somewhere between the enforced binaries. This approach was suggested at the Palatine symposium, which took place on September 17th 2010 at the Scarborough Campus of Hull University, whereby it was suggested that hypothetical models could be set up to be agreed with or argued against, and that this process would be helpful in clarifying one's position as a pedagogue engaged in collaborative practice.

Model 1: Striated and Smooth

The Striated is perhaps more easily described than the smooth given that it imposes greater order, such a model will have many variants but will share the characteristic of being highly ordered in advance. The Smooth is reluctant to be delineated in the same way but it should be noted that there is no implication (and no criticism) of disorganization, except to say that it is the *finding* and fluxion of the organization of the second model as opposed to the *giving* of the organization of the first that has pedagogical merit in this mode, one discovers and learns from making mistakes rather than preempting them and being forearmed to deal with them. The models draw on Deleuze and Guattari's terms 'Rhizomatic and Arborescent' and 'Striated and Smooth' (as they are used in 'A thousand Plateaus'²). Albeit these are inexact borders in the reality of collaborative practice, they are a forced separation here for the purposes of examination.

² Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F (2008), *A thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. (trans. Brian Massumi). London and New York: Continuum.

	Striated	Smooth
Short description	Parameters are carefully planned in advance so that students are taken through a highly structured experience	Students and staff are in at the deep end and generate the structures and experience as they go
Descriptors	Arborescent Scaffolded (ladder rungs) Thick planning Teleological	Rhizomatic Slippery (no foot holds) Thinly planned Always through the middle
Structure	Stages are highly structured (systematically organized) by the expert from beginning to end of project.	Participants move along ever increasing lines of connection, mappings that are continually modifying, reversing, and detaching themselves.
Leadership	Expertise is brought to bear upon the structure to maximize efficacy.	Participants operate as a self calibrating body which changes throughout.
Prior knowledge	Expert led Introduction to collaborative process - raising awareness thus preparing students for expected situations (e.g. conflict) and bettering their chances of 'success'.	Participant led mapping of knowledge conceptually and practically. Pitfalls are uncovered through experience, knowledge is largely <i>a posteriori</i> .
Paradigms	Case studies, analysis of existing models is given prior to the commencement of practical work setting up paradigms of practice (benchmarks to be judged against).	Participants map and remap connections and knowledge. Benchmarks are localised and moveable.
Generative process	linear and iterative: e.g. explorative talks – action (making) – evaluation – reject/accept/modify – (repeat) – Perform.	Protocol for engagement is established through negotiation.
Product	Work is concretized and prepared for performance.	Level of 'polish' required is negotiated. No 'final performance' required.
End point	Work and process evaluated and reflected upon with regard to timeline for giving of 'final' performance.	Project 'exits' according to external influence (e.g. time constraint – work has to stop here).
Assessment	Marking according to established	No criteria is set preceding project.

	criteria set out preceding project.	Criteria for assessment rises, falls and changes throughout the project.
Grade	Final grade given by experts according to pre-established criteria.	Qualitative evaluation is reached through conversation (but no mark given).
Learning	Expert knowledge and guidance ensures maximum achievement of preset learning (outcomes)	Learning is not confined to a predetermined teleology. Outcomes are not pre-set but are established upon reflection (identifying what was learnt)

Model 2: Complimentary and Integrative modes

Drawing on two of Vera John-Steiner's modes of collaborative types³ and expanding from qualitative comments in the survey, this model draws out two distinct opposing modes of collaboration often found in inter- and multi- disciplinary work. It confronts the borders of the two terms and forces a divide between the multi-disciplinary where disciplines are present 'side by side' (eg music 'accompanying' dance) and the interdisciplinary where such boundaries are non-existent or much less well defined (at least in comparison to the 'music accompanying dance' model).

As with the previous model this is an enforced binary whereby models might be set up so that their very failure to represent an actuality allows further clarity for the observer viewing an 'actual' collaborative event.

In complimentary mode the actor acts, the dancer dances *etc* yet the performance (or event, process *etc*) is a collaboration between these disciplines. In integrative mode we might expect each performer to be engaging in actions that appear to contain elements of discernable disciplines or have arrived at a new hybrid or intermedial 'discipline'. Such terminology is contested (which makes the engagement and the study of it so fascinating) and the engagement with entering into this area of uncertainty (by the students) is noted in the survey as an important 'challenge' to convention.

³ John-Steiner, V (2000). *Creative Collaboration*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

	Complimentary	Integrated
Short description	Students bring own discipline to the work and remain within that area (e.g musicians supply the music, dancers the dancing).	Students work in all disciplines and/or blur the disciplinary boundaries (e.g combining movement, sound & speech into a 'hybrid' form).
Descriptors	Disciplines compliment each other but are observably separate Separate	Discipline boundaries are not easily observable Braided, hybridized.
Prior Skills	High level of discipline skills are brought to the project resulting in 'high quality' product within each discipline area.	Skills of 'other' disciplines are to be acquired during the process, group required to negotiate skills disparity to achieve effective product.
Leadership	Discipline groups may be lead individually for separate group works. When all groups meet then parties negotiate how their contributions work or develop with the others towards the product. Leadership decisions with regard to other disciplines are normally confined to pragmatics (e.g. duration) rather than content.	Discipline specific leaders take on role to lead whole group in the development of a particular discipline (eg a dancer may lead the whole group on developing a movement). Once trust and confidence build then individuals lead on material normally outside their discipline as their creativity becomes increasingly 'discipline-less'.
Prior knowledge	High level of prior knowledge in discipline allows quick and effective working with others in same discipline (e.g. shared terminology and working methods).	Knowledge of 'other' disciplines needs to be acquired during process (e.g. understanding the terminology and working methods of others).
Paradigms	Discipline paradigms maintained but with regard to how discipline is 'used' with others is studied (e.g. case studies of composer & choreographer).	Models of integrative practice introduced to benchmark and inform practice (e.g. Complicite, Le Coq, Goat Island).
Generative process	Each discipline produces work within itself, this is 'shown' to others, group then decides how best to combine elements, what to develop <i>etc.</i>	Contributors required to acquire other skills, group required to negotiate skills and knowledge gap (often by trial and error) to find integrated material that is both effective and performable by the ensemble.
Product	Clearly defined discipline boundaries, high technical level in each area. Work appears multi-disciplinary.	Unclear discipline boundaries, moderated technical level (with regard to individual disciplines). inter-disciplinarity is achieved.

Assessment	Skill levels can be assessed at expected discipline level, creativity can be assessed within the discipline and with regard to response or complementarity to other participating disciplines.	Skill levels cannot be assessed as to prior ability of those in separate disciplines, rather ability to work effectively in other areas may be considered alongside creative contribution to project.
Learning	How one's art form interacts with other art forms. Understanding of other art forms through observation and working alongside.	Experiential understanding of other art forms, their limits, nuances, terminologies and working methods. How others engage with one's own primary art form (as they were required to do in the other's art form).

Section 6

Case Studies and Commentaries

The following case studies and short essays have been written by contributors in response to the issues raised throughout the project.

- **Evelyn Jamieson** (University of Chester). *Collaborative Practice – Some thoughts.*
- **Fiona Bannon** (University of Leeds). *Making Collaboration Common Practice. Working with external partners to enhance collaborative learning experiences at undergraduate level.*
- **Christopher Newell** (University of Hull, Scarborough). Some over-the top rambling on collaborative practice modules.
- **Robert Wilsmore** (York St John University). *How to move a piano when you don't know 'how to move a piano'.*
- **Fabia Ward** (Former Performance and Dance student: University of Hull, Scarborough, now freelance performance artist). *Interdisciplinary Art Practice.*
[A reflective commentary on a presentation given at the PALATINE symposium, September, 2010 exploring the experience of the Performance and Creative Technology interdisciplinary collaboration module]
- **Joshua Newman** (Theatre student: York St John university). *Six Microcosms of Collaboration.*
[Reflective essay on level 2 Practice as Research module exploring modes of interdisciplinary collaboration]

Collaborative Practice - some thoughts

Evelyn Jamieson
University of Chester

Collaborative Art Practices in HE: Mapping and Developing Pedagogical Models – Palatine

Friday 17 September and Saturday 18 September 2010. Scarborough Campus: School of Arts & New Media: University of Hull.

The context for this paper was a two-day symposium hosted by the School of Arts & New Media, University of Hull (Scarborough Campus). The PALATINE research organisers were not calling for papers or workshops but instead, 'for interest in both sharing [participants'] own practice in the roundtable discussion and responding to a draft document reporting on the current practice which will be distributed to the working group prior of the symposium'. A survey had been undertaken online to collect the data to be collated and mapped. The questions asked in the survey were related to two main questions: 'How is interdisciplinary collaboration "taught" in HE institutions?' and 'What pedagogical models are identified and developed?'

The proposal outline stated: '...in the context of Performing and Creative Arts departments in HE institutions, this development project aims to:

- Take a snapshot of current collaborative art practices in HE
- Construct typologies of modes of practice
- Consider how pedagogies may be developed
- Disseminate documentation setting out, and commenting on, pedagogical approaches to collaborative practice.
- Following the responses collected at the symposium, a final version of the report will be published on the Palatine website'.

The data presented from the collaborative practice research questionnaire/survey, 'The Mapping and Developing Pedagogical Models' survey document illustrated that there were many diverse practices, working methods and perceptions of where, when and how collaborative practice operates within the HE performing arts sector. There were two distinct categories: a) the pragmatic side, for example, timetabling (long or short projects/modules, length of time), year groups, across subject disciplines or within, number of staff involved, etc., and b) the philosophical position underpinning the reasons and decisions for making the choices in a), i.e., the pragmatic side. The second point, the philosophical position, was where our discussion group wanted to focus its attention. As collaborative practice is clearly an approach not a discipline, the fragility or lack of clear, set parameters, symbolised the fact that we are working with no particular frameworks.

On returning home from the two-day symposium, I revisited Catriona Scott's, SEDA (Staff and Educational Development Association) paper, published in 2004 which sought 'to interrogate some of the different levels of "invisibility" present within interdisciplinary collaboration, and how

these might be made manifest and tangible'. This practice-based research was carried out by the author at Dartington College of Arts as part of the HEFCE's Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL). The paper's title was *Assessing Group Practice*. It was the overriding aim of this FDTL research project to identify 'key values of interdisciplinary collaboration' and to find ways in which these key *values* could be made more explicit for students and how the methodologies of interdisciplinary collaborative practice could help us to work towards a more effective and transparent assessment process.

Values

Our discussion group was primarily concerned with the philosophical position underpinning our initiative that appeared to be invisible at this stage but could be teased out of the data presented in the mapping survey. How could we make these values visible so that they be recognised as key precepts for the teaching, learning and assessment of collaborative practice?

There were tangible points or values that came out of our discussion group. I decided to use the Scott 'values' as a baseline to see whether any correlation could be made with this current research project. The Scott research questions, which were subsequently published as part of a teaching guide series, are listed below.

- *How are collaborative groups/roles within groups negotiated or established?*
- *How is the work facilitated, given that we should not assess anything that we have not provided students with the opportunity to learn?*
- *How do we deal with the values students ascribe to certain activities, and those values that they assume are those of staff?*
- *How do students recognise when the boundaries they have set themselves are there to provide an appropriate frame, and when they are erected as a matter of avoidance?*
- *Where does the collaboration occur; in discussion, planning and reflection or through an active dialogue between the processes, materials and methodologies involved in making? Are we in danger of valuing one aspect of collaboration over another in the ways we currently conceive of assessment?*
- *How do we design and implement assessment that recognises individual contributions, while retaining the values of the collaborative experience?*
- *How do we assess the 'invisible' e.g. in interdisciplinary collaborative work, how do we value those disciplines, or particular contributions from individual participants, which may not be clearly visible within the final work?*

This current PALATINE research project has to make the invisible visible and shape a rigorous rationale why we should place credence upon collaborative practice within the performing arts and the wider Higher Education curriculum. These points above are a mixture of a) the pragmatics and b) the philosophical position and have helped frame some precepts that were put forward at the symposium in our discussion group.

Boundaries and Structures

In Scott's paper she proposed that for the purposes of her research she used the term interdisciplinary 'to refer to engagements where two, or more, of these fields collide or elide' (Scott.

2004: 2). This may seem to be rather negative or dramatic but often by having people come together in creative work can cause some kind of reaction as each art form crosses a boundary, moving not into another one but finding a new place or common space together. Where does this co-operation and negotiation happen? Scott talks about what is 'shared between' and the 'space between' the disciplines which in Foucault's terms allows for the differences and equalities across discursive formations to happen, crossing boundaries. Collaborative practice whether it is interdisciplinary, intradisciplinary, multidisciplinary, cross-disciplinary or intermedial, in all cases where the boundary of language can be surmounted, there is the process by which the disciplines communicate and enter a dialogical space. They '...explore existing and potential relationships and partnerships between disciplines, engage with those spaces between fields of practice and discourse, and help clarify the boundaries of an individual's own developing practice'. (Scott 2002: 2). Our discussion group saw these boundaries as 'border crossings', moving across boundaries, entering an intermedial space to find and develop a new emergent construct together.

On a pragmatic front, when entering the same space, in empathetic terms, empathy is key and it is of course a fundamental concept in starting any collaborative enterprise. Also in this context, it resonates with how an organisation, faculty or department values the pedagogical development of collaborative practice. An organisation may adopt a structural collaborative model and it is how this is filtered down, across and within the curricula, that is an important consideration. A holistic approach was suggested in our discussion group. If there isn't a positive consensus of shared values towards collaborative practice, then there may be disparate practices and a lack of cohesion and constructive dialogue within an organisation concerning, how, when and where collaborative practice occurs. Therefore the position and value of collaborative practice loses impact, identity, and inevitably priority. The overriding structure or framework that supports or houses collaborative practice needs to be robust but at the same time allows for various models of collaborative practice to develop.

Every collaborative exercise is unique, having its own particular specificity in terms of construction, design, operation, specification and outcome. A one size fits all approach is not a realistic possibility, but what can be illustrated is a series of models of practice illustrating a range of collaborative methodologies, approaches to the work and outcomes according to the specific aims, objectives and context. And, just as pertinent, what can be presented is a set of core pedagogical principles, precepts for the teaching, learning and assessment of collaborative practice in Higher Education.

So coming back to the question, how can we make the invisible visible? Here are some questions that were raised in the Symposium discussions:

- How can we make the key principles more transparent, understood and acknowledged?

- What kind of profile or position at the end of the day does this kind of practice hold within our various programmes and institutions? Is there a clear directive for collaborative practice within the university mission, strategic, faculty or department plan, programme specification, or module descriptor?
- Is collaborative practice central or focus to course, programme, or department construction?
- Is there a top-down strategy or are lecturers working to make collaborative practice happen purely at ground level, with the students?
- How is collaborative practice facilitated? Is the tutor the lead learner in the process? Are the tutors collaborating as well as the students in a project? If so, how, when and where does this happen?
- What are some of the kinds of collaborative practice models – exemplars?
- How do we assess collaborative practice?
- If working in an interdisciplinary capacity, do we value another discipline as much as our own?

Myths

There is evidence to suggest that often there is a false perception or more superior attitude surrounding one's own discipline or subject. Shan Wareing (2009) in her paper, 'Postcolonial discourse as an analytical framework to explore disciplinarity and transdisciplinarity in higher education' has found in her research that we see our own discipline as something 'better' than other disciplines. Shan Wareing (2009) refers to this attitude as the creation of 'stories': 'It is perhaps these "stories" about disciplinary epistemology which hold the answer to why the academy insists on the importance of discipline based staff development'. (Wareing. 2009: 5, after Becker and Trowler 2001:37 – 38).

Wareing goes on to cite Becker and Trowler's paper (2001), in which they cite Taylor (1976) who 'describes how disciplines make use of "heroic myths" in their social construction, using Geography as an illustration':

Other disciplines are portrayed [by geographers] as involving specialist 'blinkers' or not fully appreciating the importance of the spatial dimension. In contrast there is a myth of the geographer as 'the great synthesiser', the 'foreman' who combines the individually futile ideas of the blind labouring specialists. (Becker and Trowler 2001: 48)

It is evident that Taylor in his deliberations sees these myths as 'vast generalisations that have the basic role of creating an overall purpose and cohesion'. Looking again at Scott's exercise, perhaps many other points of how to facilitate 'good' collaborative enterprise between or across disciplines may or may not have been exerted. The question still remains: Scott's notion of

values may have been noble but it may not necessarily have acknowledged the 'superior' discipline concept, that is, I am better than you.

The belief that 'academics construct "stories" to explain the superiority of their own disciplines over others' (Wareing. 2009: 8) is evident. Recognising this fact, there is an in-built resistance, whether conscious or not to other subjects or domains of knowledge other than our own. The ability to recognise this and go beyond perceived prejudices is important. Lack of respect and empathy between disciplines will stop collaborative practice at the first hurdle. It is important that we recognise that this does happen and that it should not be swept under the table and ignored but acknowledged and brought to the fore to be discussed and then to move on from.

Of course, it would be hard to believe that everything about a collaborative project is utopian. It is essentially about finding some common ground, understanding and respect as a way into an evolving and developing collaborative engagement. As Scott (2002) cites David Hughes (1996):

... collaboration covers all kinds of situations where artists work together. The main idea is that there is a marriage of equals, equal artists and equal art forms. But things change when people and art forms are brought into the same field, the zone of their overlapping and combative fields of force. What are the changes that happen to artists and art forms when they enter the same field, the same space? (Hughes, 1996: 13)

Partnership

The interesting point here is about equality and this is one of the more difficult things to achieve especially in a shared creative process. The various working methods and practices that can be found are ultimately about finding a way to uphold respect for each other and enter a productive and constructive dialogue. There has been evidence in the social sciences of research being carried out on the understanding of the differences between partnership and collaboration.

Ros Carnwell and Alex Carson talk about this in their paper 'The concepts of partnership and collaboration' in 2009: partnership is about equal commitment and collaboration is essentially about working jointly. Therefore, sometimes the notion of equality is what becomes dissipated in some collaborative practice models and that there is an imposed distinct hierarchical construction. As time has progressed there has been shift towards talking about collaboration as a way of working together and breaking down barriers in order to affect a more effective working and productive working relationship. Characteristics of collaboration based on work from Hudson et al. 1998 were cited and summarised by Carnwell and Carson (2009):

- Non-hierarchical relationship

- Sharing of expertise
- Willingness to work together towards an agreed purpose
- Trust and respect in collaborators
- Partnership
- Inter-dependency
- Highly connected network
- Low expectation of reciprocation

There is clearly evidence to suggest that working together requires that each collaborator enter into an agreed understanding and a dialogical space in whatever context. The performing arts have always been concerned with creating artwork together and have been able to communicate between and across the disciplines from the earliest ventures into opera and ballet. It is a question of how far along the spectrum of ownership and authorship the collaborative event is prepared to go.

Shared creative endeavour

Drama, theatre and dance use group work and see devised work, generally speaking, as a more shared creative endeavour. In the 1950s there was a shift away from hierarchical theatre making processes towards more democratic collaborative making practices also known as devising, a shared or collective making process.

As discovered as part of my own PhD research, as we progress through the decades, the resultant social, cultural and political changes have affected the making of artistic artefacts. Therefore, some of the 20th century's social movements most definitely inform the position of today's more collective and creative collaborative alternatives to traditional hierarchical production work. Therefore, we have seen a more concerted effort to establish modules and projects within the Higher Education performing arts curriculum that adopt collective approaches to making art works as well as more hierarchical practice. These shared, collective creative practices have been around since the 1970s in Higher Education and it is important that this way of working be identified as an extremely valuable learning experience for the student in order to develop his/her understanding, knowledge and skill in both social interactive and artistic discourses.

Although this kind of practice did not feature heavily in our discussion group, this form of creating and working together in the performing arts was clearly evident in the student performance work we saw in the evening as part of the symposium event. Many performing arts departments use the mode of practice as a strategy to develop some of the values presented in Scott's practice-based research exercise that are important to the aspiring artist's portfolio of knowledge and skill.

But of course this is just one way of working within the broader horizon of collaborative practice. Therefore, it is important to be able to value and make visible the diversity of collaborative models and ways of working that can be found within the performing arts according to the function and context of the particular project. The following list includes some examples of working collaboratively:

- Collaboration involving people working separately within their own specialisms and bringing the separate discourses together at some point but working on the same remit and goal
- Collaboration working separately within one's own specialism and bringing the separate discourses together at some point but each collaborator has a separate final outcome
- Collaboration as a shared creative process whereby the collaborators are working as a group, that is, collective approach and having a single shared goal
- Collaboration as a shared creative process whereby the collaborators are working as a group, that is, collective approach but collaborators have separate final outcome

The above is not exhaustive but begins to suggest possible constructs of collaborative approaches whether within a single or multiple disciplines or interdisciplinary context.

Drawing some conclusions

Collaborative practice is fundamentally about entering a conversation, shaping a meaningful dialogue and forming a relationship to fulfil one or more goals whatever the parameters of the project. It is about crossing boundaries, entering another 'space' together and, ideally, creating a new one – an intermedial space. It is about finding a language of communication, creating trust and respect, sharing of expertise, as well as developing a strong partnership.

To reiterate what was stated earlier in this paper, we have to make the positive values of collaborative practice transparent supported by some concrete exemplars as well as models of practice and promote the development of the new at the same time.

Collaborative practice should be at the centre of course construction. This was an agreed precept at the symposium. Collaboration should be seen at the core of a course as it provides a strong basis to build connections within, across and outside a given discipline. This basis can also be applied in terms of more general curricula up to the level of the organisation. Collaborative practice should be seen as an evolving, forming and re-forming ecology, a constantly changing environment that helps inform, design and shape new practices of the future.

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Making Collaboration Common Practice

Working with external partners to enhance collaborative learning experiences at undergraduate level.

Fiona Bannon

University of Leeds

Disciplines

Dance, Performance Design, Managing Performance, Theatre and Performance

This case study highlights some of the work and ideas that have emerged from experiences delivering an undergraduate module that prioritizes learning in and through creative collaborative practice. A distinct feature of the particular module (Collaborative Performance Project) is that the students work in partnership with a number of external professional agencies and organizations. The context of working on an externally facing project initiates a sense of mutuality where the students have chance to work in real world contexts with an imperative to produce high quality work. For the partners who work with us; to devise and deliver these projects there is an opportunity to benefit from the dynamism of this distinctive work that contributes value and impact to the important roles they each fulfil as they work to maintain and develop their professional goals.

The Context

Creative collaborative practice is built into the ethos of the School of Performance and Cultural Industries (PCI). Students at all levels of their degree have the opportunity to take part in modules that address ways of working in creative teams. In year one; *Collaborative Processes* and year two; ***Collaborative Performance Project*** the modules are compulsory for all undergraduate students. In year three students can opt to take *Performance Project*, a module where with the mentoring support of tutors, a company of students devise and present a full production dealing with all of the interrelated features of mounting the project.

What we say about the School

Performance is central to how human beings communicate and interact. We suggest that by deepening an understanding of communication from the perspective of a performer, designer or manager and within the context of the cultural industries, we can enable students to develop and utilize their creativity, insight and adaptability as well as their ability to produce experience in the formation of practical projects.

Performance is central to the cultural industries, one of the world's fastest growing sources of employment. With these thoughts in mind we aim to equip graduates to create significant work and to become leaders and catalysts for the future. As a school we currently offer four separate, but interrelated, BA (Hons) degree programmes in; Dance, Managing Performance,

Performance Design, Theatre & Performance. In each programme the students are helped to develop an understanding of their specialism through the investigation of theory and related practical exploration. Integral to the design of the learning experience is engagement in interdisciplinary work and collaboration. We use the application of specialist knowledge in creative collaboration as a way to forge innovative thinking, something that requires rigor and quality alongside the ability to show respect and open-mindedness. At first we explore these ideas within the school and later in projects with external partners. The emphasis is to study the processes involved in productive teamwork rather than to solely focus on examining the quality of products made. In this we explore ways of working in teams where a sense of complementarity, trust, ownership, identity, and dialogue are highlighted. It means that we have to attempt to maintain an environment where each person has the opportunity to contribute, whilst being aware of ongoing changes that occur in group dynamics that might impact on the work in any number of foreseen and unforeseen ways.

Through combining programme specialism with ways of working found in other disciplines the students enhance their awareness of a broad range of transferable skills and alternate ways of working. This is particularly evident in communication, adaptability, the initiation and completion of team based tasks, self and peer evaluation, critical evaluation and problem solving.

Why we build collaboration into the learning experience.

The target is for each student, from the different undergraduate programmes to become a versatile member of an innovative and creative team, to be able to respond to and create performance based events for a variety of contexts and to critically evaluate the impact of their work and the work of others within a particular situation.

A good place to start is Chris Bilton's, *Management and Creativity*, in which he argues,

Innovative teams generate and develop ideas by switching frames of reference and challenging each other's preconceptions (Bilton, 2007, 35).

This he suggests is something quite different from "brainstorming" where the tendency can be to prize the generation of a quantity of ideas above the quality. Innovation in these terms requires more rigor, where the ability to discern the potential contribution or value of an idea is both a pertinent and noteworthy trait.

In our work with the students the necessity to be able to identify a community of practice becomes vital. Involved in this is the need to be able to identify interrelationships that can exist between, 'I' and 'we' at any one time. What we target is the operation of 'creative teams' whilst being aware of the tensions that can exist between any individual and the collective endeavour.

If managed effectively, you can maintain a balance by allowing individuals to step outside of their comfort zones and towards shared and innovative thinking. Encouraging this 'dual focus' helps the students to more fully appreciate the complex interconnections that exist in working

together, in fulfilling shared aims and in delivering agreed outcomes.

Working in Partnership - example projects presented, 2010.

Collaborative Performance Project

The module is delivered in the second semester of year two, building on the ***Collaborative Processes*** module taught in year one. Because the module involves interaction with parties beyond the University, it is important that management is carefully considered and efficient. PCI has a number of long standing external partnerships, all students are made aware of the importance placed upon these relationships and the expectations and responsibility placed on them for the project's smooth delivery. The six projects shown below made different demands and required different collaborative and management strategies.

A distinct aim of the module is to develop an appropriate outcome that might be a performance, a series of workshops, an event or a resource and that this should be in response to a specified and agreed contract. Each negotiated and project specific contract has to accommodate a number of important relationships; for example between PCI and the partner organization, between the partner organization and the student company, between PCI and each student company, between PCI and each individual student and between each member of the newly formed student company itself.

How the module works?

- students self-select to become a company member of one project
- the module runs over a period of 11 weeks
- one tutor works with each project as a mentor/observer
- introductory lectures outline the expectation of work within the module and the methods of assessment.
- students are provided with an initial outline/brief from the partner organization and begin a process to develop their response and draft contract intending to fulfill identified aims and objectives.
- assessment uses two primary methods; the first (process - 60%) evaluates contribution to the completion of the agreed project including detailed self and peer assessment. The second is an individual critical evaluation (40%) where students have an opportunity to reflect on their own contribution and the work of the company and to identify future ideas or ways of working.

National Coal Mining Museum

Partner Organisation: The National Coal Mining Museum of England

Mentor Tutor: Katie Beswick

Engagement: Working with four schools in the Wakefield area,
Horbury School, Cathedral School, Freestone Business and
Enterprise College and Ossett School,

Project Outline:

Create a drama festival to celebrate the regions mining history. PCI students ran workshops for year ten pupils in the partner schools and used specialist events management skills to liaise with the museum and to coordinate the festival. The festival included performances by all partners in various spaces in and around the museum site. One feature was an adaptation of Euripides Iphigenia at Aulis, which reframed a historical text to reflect themes surrounding mining and the local community. The confidence of students from the partner schools grew throughout the process and it was a fabulous opportunity for the local community to celebrate their rich cultural heritage

The West Yorkshire Fire Service

Partner Organisation: The West Yorkshire Fire Service

Mentor Tutors: Philip Kiszely and Tim Stephenson

Engagement: Theatre in Education workshops and performance for over 500
Year Nine pupils in Leeds and the surrounding areas.

Project Outline:

Devise and present a Road Safety Theatre in Education Project The hard-hitting plays devised by the student company, dealt with death by dangerous driving and issues surrounding substance/alcohol abuse in young people. It proved to be such a success and was subsequently filmed for an educational resource package with accompanying DVD, made available by the West Yorkshire Fire Service.

The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery

Partner Organisation: The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery.

Mentor Tutors: Fiona Bannon

Engagement: Public performance with targeted audience development

Project Outline:

The project team worked closely with the Gallery Curator, Layla Bloom, to develop an event for **'Museums at Night'** a Europe-wide initiative that aims to draw new audiences into museums and galleries using projects that bring the places to life. Set against the seminal works of The Stanley and Audrey Burton Gallery Collection and the touring works of artist Alan Davie, **MAKE.ART.MOVE.YOU** explored ways to integrate personal and collective relationships with art works and with gallery spaces. The project highlighted ways that the public approach visiting an art gallery and how our individual engagement with the works might be enriched through finding a way to become more personally associated with the art and to notice small detail, taking time to build individual relationships.

Opera North

Partner Organisation: Opera North Education Unit

Mentor Tutors: Kara McKenchie

Engagement: South Leeds Primary Schools: Low Road, Windmill and Castleton.

Project Outline:

This was the fourth commission to present a series of workshops to primary schools students. PCI students worked closely with the Education Unit developing materials related to the current Opera North production, *Rusalka*. Students were introduced to running music workshops for Key Stage 2 children by Animateur and singer Sally Egan.

The work culminated in a series of showings where the children were able to share songs they had written, as well as some arts and crafts materials relating to the under-water theme of *Rusalka*. The children acquired new skills and confidence – it was lovely to see a little girl who hardly spoke at the start of the project stepping up to sing solo at one of the showings!

Performance with Offenders

Partner Organisation: HMP New Hall, Rivendell YOI, Springfield PRU (Key Stage 4) and Priory PRU (Key Stage 3).

Mentor Tutors: Alice O'Grady

Engagement: Workshop and performances at partner institutions

Project Outline:

This particular work enables students to facilitate performance work in a variety of challenging settings where resistance to educational intervention can be high and the emotional impact of delivering such work profound.

At the Pupil Referral Unit in Wakefield, the company aimed to raise aspirations through creative activities incorporating music and film as well as drama. Students in the second company worked with HMP New Hall, to create an adaptation of John Godber's play 'Teechers' exploring themes of education, identity and opportunity, adapting the play for an audience of female prisoners. The third company worked with a group of adult female prisoners studying for a range of hairdressing qualification. The students conducted workshops around the themes of beauty and perception, addressing the low levels of self-esteem that are often apparent in a prison setting of this kind.

Leeds City Art Gallery

Partner Organisation: Leeds City Art Gallery

Mentor Tutors: David Shearing

Engagement: Public performance with targeted audience development

Project Outline:

In this third year of collaboration with the gallery the students were given the brief to create an intervention in the space that might challenge how the public engage with the gallery environment itself. The students developed a series of works they entitled '*Itching the Art*', presenting them all on the same day.

‘Constructing the female form’, sculpting the female form in real time by using industrial materials to shape and mould a live performer, balancing literal and metaphorical constructions of the female body. In **‘Synes-Scene’** the company created an original sound environment that the public could experience through headphones. **‘C’est Art, Non?’** added a surreal visual art flavour breaking down barriers carried by the stereotypical art gallery. Members of the public were invited to have tea with the fine art elite, to question the nature of the art gallery, and what might be meant by ‘art’.

Key Strengths

- Enables students to identify and develop independent projects
- Provides opportunities to work in ‘real life’ contexts
- Investigates the ambiance of cultural change in the context of performance and communication
- Considers interrelationships between the individual and collective points of view
- Develops individuals abilities to function in ambiguous situations, to exhibit flexibility, creativity and adaptability.
- Questions the limits, boundaries and perceived assumptions of performance practice
- Emphasizes interaction between people.
- Initiates incubator projects for future development and/or employment.

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National Coal Mining Museum



Some over-the top rambling on collaborative practice modules.

Christopher Newell
University of Hull (Scarborough)

Students look forward to collaborative modules, anticipating the opportunity to work with friends and to make something personal and special. Perhaps something they have been planning together, outside the formal learning environment for many months. They skip into our offices and describe the project they have in mind, the people they want to work with and maybe 'the story' or 'the staging' or the 'technology.' The 24 loudspeakers, 4 video screens and how their work will be 'different,' 'hilarious,' 'shocking' 'immersive.' Every year my heart leaps with theirs, sharing their enthusiasm for the unconstrained opportunity to do something you want to do, big and bold and 'mind-blowing.'

Months later, as the collaborative module takes shape they learn that their dream of freedom and fun, an opportunity to show the world, and us, what they can really do, is not going to materialise. Collaboration is now a difficult thing in which they are challenged to work with people they don't know, on projects they don't like, to deadlines they find unreasonable and to apply 'models of collaborative practice' they don't care about. A Gantt Chart showing how they are going to meet their objectives and establishing verifiable goals has done it's work and their original concept, conceived with vitality and commitment, is now a desiccated 'learning contract'. On top of this they have been asked to write a reflective report or present a research seminar: the making part (the bit they were looking forward to) has been squeezed dry in between 'all this other stuff.'

It is curious to reflect, that for many of us, originally from an arts or performance practice background our experience, the experience that probably drew us into the creative world we now inhabit, was probably more like the student dream, than the collaborative module reality.

Part of the problem seems to lie in our insistence that we know best. We denigrate the student's experience of collaboration despite the fact that the technology they spend a substantial part of their free time engaging with is designed for collaboration. They are expert in arranging for groups of friends to meet at impromptu venues for impromptu happenings. Actually they are probably more expert in technologically mediated collaboration than we are, but we insist on weekly production meetings, written reporting processes and audit trails. Their once exuberant skip is replaced by a desolate trudge from pointless assessment to meaningless milestone. We probably omit to mention that when we collaborated we didn't bother with any of this. We did not make 'scrapbooks' or 'mind maps' we probably didn't have time after all we were too busy 'making work.'

In our efforts to make things fair, accountable, assessable, academic, safe we are in danger of making collaboration 'boring.' This seems like a terrible choice. If collaboration lies at the heart

of much artistic and performance practice by making it boring we ensure that the next generation of artists will avoid it. If it is not a good fit with university academic criteria then don't teach it at university, instead leave it as an unsullied promise or a dream, as a stimulus to future creative endeavour.

Perhaps the time has come to value the chaos and unfairness of collaborative practice, the cut and thrust, give and take, the absence of reliable rules, standards or processes. We cannot protect students from the brutality of living by arts practice or the cruelty of collaborations that don't work. The point about swimming is you get wet. The point about collaboration is you may get hurt.

How to move a piano when you don't know 'How to move a piano': Assessing Creativity and Collaboration in Higher Education

Robert Wilsmore
York St John University

The following text offers a glimpse into a part of the C4C (Collaboration for Creativity) project run by the CETL at York St John University. It problematises creative and collaborative contributions and assessment in interdisciplinary student work through a short case study.

A preamble: To invent something that has already been invented, how is this seen through the lens of creativity? It is quite likely to be something that we have all noticed at some point; that we had thought up the idea of the moving picture frame (rather than the static smiling holiday snap) long before digital picture frame came on the market. How many of us have already 'invented' the electronic paper-back book that is paper-like as a 'normal' book should be (just how hard can it be to turn very small things from white to black and back again?). Rest assured then that someone somewhere will already have put it on the market, and someone else will have figured out how to do it cheaper.

The C4C CETL project at York St John posed two immanent pedagogical projects, that which concerned the nature of creativity within the learning environment and that which concerned the inter-subjective construction of the created work, or at least the learning that is attained from this process. Here then is a microcosm of one case study that explores some pedagogical issues that arose from these projects.

A group of Performance students drawn from all undergraduate levels and from the disciplines of Dance, Music and Theatre were asked to improvise with no preset criteria beyond a time limit. This was then viewed through the pedagogy of improvisation with regard to how assessment itself might be improvised and also as to how collaborative creativity can be assessed. At one point in the improvised performance two events occurred more or less simultaneously that brought these questions into focus. Student J decided to stand still for a long time, most of the performance in fact. What might be the creative contribution of a student who is doing 'nothing' and how can J be collaborating with the other students if he is standing still and not 'offering' anything? If we had imposed the criteria that the students 'actively' participate would J have taken this step (or lack of steps) and would something have been lost by his activity?

J becomes a focal point in the space, the only other object that has any similar level of fixity is an upright piano and the students began to use these places as conflicting gravitational points to move to and away from, to bring shifting perspectives by making this stasis active and dynamic. The 'nothing' is a dialectical necessity, the creative act here is lost without it, and the 'offering' is the assurance of fixity onto which the other students are able to construct creative acts

(temporarily they have control over their shifting proximity). J's act may appear passive, but it enables activity and is part of the activity itself. How then to assess the contingency of this static act? What if there had been no interaction from other students, does J 'fail' for lack of creativity and collaboration, or would he 'pass' for offering a valuable point of fixity and the other students fail for not engaging with this opportunity?

As for the second (briefly) inanimate object, the piano, it was not long before this began to sound and to move. Hidden from the face-on audience some students, crouching behind it, began to play it and push it slowly forward. J at this point is static on the opposite side of the space, his head and body now wrapped in purple material, and with the piano moving by itself (seemingly) towards the audience the students had generated a moment worthy of Complicite, or perhaps Pina Bausch or Robert Wilson. Or, more pertinently here perhaps, the Judson Church.

How then to judge creativity? Sternberg et al (2002)⁴ notes three basic categories of creative contributions: that which is paradigm enforcing (continuing the norm), that which is paradigm breaking (departing from the norm) and that which synthesises different paradigms (forming a 'new' model). The point here then is that 'newness' is related to knowledge. The standpoints of the creators and the viewers may be different and this affects the perceived creativity. Stephen Bottoms' article 'How to move a piano'⁵ considers modes of collaboration and at one point chooses an event in 1963 at the Judson Memorial Church, New York. In this performance a piano is played and moved by an interdisciplinary group of performers. If then, nearly 50 years later, an interdisciplinary group of students in (Old) York come up with a similar idea it may be a paradigm breaking act of creativity for them if they have never encountered Stephen Bottoms' article or the work in question, but is old news (and paradigm enforcing) for those that have.

And what about the assessor, does a mark given for creativity relate to whether *they* know previously similar acts, or whether 'they know that the students know'? Does the assessor take the position that newness is but 'a tissue of quotes' (Barthes) and either ignore this aspect or engage in counting how many 'quotes' are present?

Firstly, we should dispense with the mark, in terms of learning this is 'death by numbers'. Then, through conversation, feedback and evaluation (reflexivity) the student sees the creative spaces that they inhabit and that nothing more is required than they act with this knowledge in future acts of production.

⁴ Sternberg identifies eight types of creative contribution within the three main categories. See Sternberg, R et al (2002) *The Creativity Conundrum*. Taylor and Francis group.

⁵ Stephen J Bottoms' presented his essay 'How to move a piano' at the Goat Island summer school in 200 which is reproduced Goat Island's School Book 2 (2000).

Interdisciplinary Art Practice

Fabia Ward

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Former Performance and Dance student

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Performance and Creative Technology

The BOX

The BOX was the name given to a first grade, collaborative project which I along with 5 third year students designed, produced and performed for a final year university project. *Performance and Creative Technology* (PACT) was presented as the only module on the Art and New Media course that brought together students from several different programs of study and made it obligatory to assemble a working group that combined at least three different disciplines. These included specialisms in dance, live performance, digital media, sound and film production and creative music technology.

I feel confident in saying; the appeal to most of the students that embarked on this module was its intriguing, creative nature. By that I mean the potential objective that a sharing of knowledge and skill could obtain greater resources, recognition and incentive when utilizing fresh expertise that may enhance a performance/project idea.

Furthermore, concentrating on my personal experience when working on The BOX , The project team that came together due to a corresponding attraction to the idea, consisted of two music technicians, two theatre and performance students, one digital media student, and me, a dance student. The concept of The BOX involved the transformation of a familiar design, (a fairground simulator ride) and developing it into a theatrical performance. This involved building an actual simulation device that could be moved around the studio space with the audience taking their seats inside the BOX, thus experiencing the illusion that they were on whatever journey the inbuilt cinema screen displayed.

At first the group presented itself as a diverse collection of people, all equally willing to bring forth the knowledge and skills acquired from their discipline areas. On the other hand what I am inclined to say most students were not prepared for, was a collaboration of human, or should I say, "student" nature. As with any group work, I heard many stories from neighbouring groups that some collaborators felt they could sit back and enjoy the ride, letting those whose work ethic was stronger take on double the amount of work over fear that the final group mark would be sabotaged by the slackers.

However to ease this issue and what I personally believe to be the major strength of the module design came in the form of a Learning Contract. The Learning Contract allowed each individual student within the group to personalize their course of study, set out objectives, research activities, production activities and the weighting of marks focused on a particular area of study thus reflecting how much work you put into one's personal deliverance.

The guidelines were made very clear within the module hand book and having an allocated tutor at hand to discuss queries, and approve decisions was a definite bonus. My group met with our allocated tutor once a week which allowed us to clarify ideas and aims. It also allowed the

marking tutor to witness the personal triumphs that were accomplished by each individual throughout the group process.

I was the coordinator for the group, which involved organising productions meetings, group tutorials, recording minutes, relaying info through E mail, creating production timelines, booking rehearsal space, liaising with people outside the university body when needing to film in public areas etc. Despite coordinator making it sound like I was the one in charge, I never felt obliged to become a director of the production. The choices made about the designs, the film footage, the sound and the project make-up itself, were all collaborative decisions.

Having set deadlines in place due to the intense time scale of the course, allowed for good time management and with the learning contract in place it was easy for me as coordinator to assign people to set tasks in order to allow these deadlines to be met.

Despite all having designated roles, as stated in our learning contracts, we didn't isolate ourselves solely to them. It became apparent very quickly that collaborating was defiantly about give and take. For example, I spent an entire weekend painting the finished BOX simply because no one else was available due to commitments outside University, but the job needed doing in order to stay on schedule and be ready performance rehearsal the following week.

In the early stages problems did arise as two group members were not 'pulling their weight.' One rarely attended meetings and both failed to produce work to the deadlines I had set out in a production timeline. While the others in the group got annoyed seeing all their hard work being compromised by those who were not contributing effectively, I found myself becoming controlling and I fear to say, bossy.

So why was The Box collaboration process a success?

The learning contract was a great asset because it stated what each individual wished to be marked on so, if you'd done your work then the marking tutor could recognise that.

On the contrary this is not what held the project together for the pure fact, Daniel's amazing film footage, would not have being effective in the overall performance if Chris and Dan's sound track had not being synced superbly well with it. And neither the film nor music would have being successful if Georgie and Mark had not designed and built the BOX to stage them in.

The one advantage we had as a working group was that we were all familiar which each other due to being part of the same degree area (Art and New Media) on a small university campus. This meant we were not meeting for the first time, were familiar with certain personality traits and there was no unease when coming together to work together. This may not have being the case if the module was conducted in a much larger University whereby the students had not previously met. Therefore I was unreserved when having to confront the two students slacking. I did not present myself angry as they would have laughed at me, but I showed my concern for their personal grading, made them believe a high grade was achievable for them as well as the others in the group and..... tempted them with a reward of a night out and a drink on me, simply because I knew that was what would appeal to the type of guys I was working with.

As Co-ordinator, if I was to change anything about the collaborative process I would have created a slightly more relaxed working atmosphere to suit the general nature of the group. For example having the group meetings outside an academic environment such as at the pub or in someone's living room, would have given an informal working atmosphere which would have

being much more appealing to those in the group whose work ethic been unsystematic and indifferent to that if I'd have being working in a group who were more suited to a desk space in the library. I was privileged to be part of a group whose collaboration chemistry was agreeable. I am not sure if the success of The BOX would still stand if the individuals within the group had not complied with each other as well.

To conclude I firmly believe that having that pre understanding of how each group member functioned because we knew each other before hand save us a lot of hassle later. However learning what can be done to make everyone an equal team player, well that knowledge was only acquired as a result of the collaboration project.

Six Microcosms of Collaboration

Joshua Newman

Theatre Student (Level 2)

(York St University)

Exposition

When approaching collaboration through practice-based research we find ourselves in the territory of practical philosophy that could consider the collaborative model as humanist ideology; however the ontology of practical research raises the importance of the 'doing' over the 'thinking' and therefore urges me to write about the practicalities of collaboration before the analysis of collaboration.

By joining with others we accept their gift of confidence, and through interdependence, we achieve competence and connection. *Together we create our futures.* (John-Steiner 2000:204)

Looking at the complimentary and integrative modes of collaboration proposed by Vera John-Steiner, a group of students engaged in workshops to discover the essence of what it is to work with other artists from your own discipline and the neighbouring disciplines of music, dance and theatre.

It is within these microcosms that I shall ask questions of communication, identification and absence in order to explore my own findings about the complimentary and integrative modes of collaboration, looking at how they appear within an interdisciplinary group of university students, of which I was a participant.

Complimentary

Starting with Shunt, a body of artists based in London creating contemporary performance where, for them, their work lives somewhere between the practices of theatre, dance, music, fine art and installation. Alex Mermikides writes about their collaborative methods as a fine blend of 'clash' and 'consensus'. Where the 'clash principle encourages unorthodox conjunctions as separately created ideas' (Mermikides 2010:161) and the consensus 'is achieved when the group shares a vision' (Mermikides 2010:155). Relating clash and consensus to the collaborative and integrative modes of collaboration we put into practice during workshops we would first need to indentify which is which, starting with the collaborative mode.

Initially we started working in parallel, placing side by side the images created by each discipline in order to successfully segregate the three practices; with the dancers dancing, musicians musicking and theatre makers making all next to each other without compassion; here we could identify each mode of working and discover how simple it was to allow the divisions between disciplines to blur.

Soon chaos began to emerge; looking at other companies, such as Black Market International, we see how attributing artists with a task to be carried out alongside another task, apathetic to neighbouring material, can achieve an intentional chaos while simultaneously evoking hermeneutic responses to performances regarding the intrinsic relationship of material.

Forced Entertainment used this disordered model for composition as a score for performance in *12am Awake and Looking Down* (1993), by placing five performers in a room with an array of costumes and a stack of cardboard signs with character names on them, some fictional and some fact; an algorithm was born. The revolving clash of a thousand different stories meant that among the meaningless combinations and chance encounters the occasional glance and interaction between two presupposed figures would glow with poignancy.

Collaboration for them then was never about perfect unity but about difference, collisions, incompatibilities. (Etchells 1999:56)

This is the very same haphazard compositional technique that we used when working in our 'complimentary mode'; by placing music, dance and theatre side by side without letting them interact or merge, as they are so keen to do, we found ourselves throwing everything and anything into our performative cocktail in the hope that something happens.

Integrative

Rather than the selective neighbouring of disciplines the integrative mode threw us into the deep end, so to speak, forcing everyone to do everything. Suddenly a few problems appeared, skill was now an issue raising the questions of how much skill is required to be competent in a foreign discipline? And how easy is it to dip in and out of someone else's doctrines for the day?

Avoiding the child-like argument of 'which discipline is hardest' and therefore requiring the most training and/or skill, the group seemed to decide almost immediately that music and dance took more skill and knowledge than theatre, I cannot say why but I think it has something to do with the years of training required to completely control either your body (dance), or an instrument (music). Due to this assumption, I won't disagree with it just yet, musicians were apprehensive about dancing and dancers/theatre makers were a little trepidatious about singing.

After a short while in the studio it became apparent that we already possessed the skills needed to dance, our naïve assumption that you had to be born pirouetting was soon thrown out the window as we discovered 'dancing ability is not based on biology, but on rigorous training, even if this training occurs informally within the context of the activities of daily life. (Fischer-Hornung 2001:92). The same thing happened with music, we found that as long as you could move you could dance and as long as you could produce sound you could make music therefore, after finally getting over our initial foibles, we found ourselves in a place where we could create work with each other and, more importantly, in consensus.

It was from this moment that we all dived into each other's disciplines, taking risks while working toward the same shared goal; eventually the constraints of complimentary collaboration were stripped away and the ensemble started to emerge. For us this was a kind of emancipation that could quite easily be likened to a metamorphosis, 'a physical sensation; my head enlarging to

six heads; my legs jumping up and down with twelve feet; my body restricted by five other bodies' (Hixson in Bottoms & Goulish 1999:121).

Mélange and Ownership

As we moved from the complimentary model of collaboration towards a more integrative approach we suddenly became aware of how much we already do within our own subject that is inter-disciplinary and integrative; a strong majority of dance work shared territory with theatre while simple vocal technique for music did the same and looking at the work of other artists as examples of inter-disciplinary collaboration we started to question the niche of material.

Pina Bausch and Vincent Dance Theatre raised awareness of a mélange happening between theatre and dance that lead us to question whether what we were seeing belonged to either or both of the aforementioned disciplines, while the work of composer and musician John Cage crossed the boundary between music as music, and music as theatre or performance; *Water Walk* (1960) being the main example.

Stranded somewhere between complimentary and integrative collaboration a problem suddenly emerged to us regarding ownership, the question of author was asking who is responsible for what?

Upon re-examination on the complimentary mode of collaboration this problem was easily solved as the dancers choreographed their movement, the musicians composed their music and the theatre makers did their 'thing', however when we turned to a more integrative way of collaborating the role of author started to get very hazy indeed. For example, it was a musician who proposed the idea of 'body percussion', which, albeit a type of drumming, involved the human body in motion and could therefore be considered dance. This rift in responsibility caused us to question 'who does what?' and more importantly 'who owns what?' Fortunately this had dissipated by the time we had created our final piece of work; the idea of a dancer choreographing had completely vanished and we found ourselves sharing our ensemble mindset with that of Gob Squad, a Nottingham/Berlin based company that functions without a set director.

Being a collective means that all of those who participate in the production of a piece of work have a personal relationship to its material and its making. (Squad 2010:12)

By the end of our exploration it was apparent that we all owned every fragment of material, even if we did not propose it; we performed it. Our bodies inhabiting a space and time, carrying out the actions in order to show the material together as a collective meant that each and every one of us was entitled to an equal claim of sovereignty.

Identification

Previously I spoke about how the group seemed to decide that theatre was the easiest of the three disciplines and although this may be true in some respects, I felt that setting a difficulty level for theatre was shunned due to our inability to identify it properly. In order to ascertain the

intangibly aloof practice of contemporary theatre we found ourselves with the problem of communicating what it is we theatre makers actually 'do' and how our discipline is different from drama. A troublesome task considering 'there is a lack of categories and words to define or even describe what it is in any positive terms' (Lehmann 2006:19), therefore leading the united theatre makers to stand as a conglomerate of performers that despite being certain of what we are not, had no real idea of what it is we do; or at least did not possess the vernacular to describe it coherently.

Our lack of set ideas on what theatre was and how it would operate within our explorations did not seem to impede progress when heading towards a shared goal; we seemed to focus on music and dance with the hope that whatever theatre is, it would just happen.

This would now lead me to denounce drama from our inter-disciplinary expedition because as it became clear that we weren't interested in it, it also became very clear that the theatre makers were not even going to consider any form of acting to be their background.

If we saw drama as the study and performance of plays, character and, essentially, lies we also saw the live art element of contemporary performance to be a mixture of "I could do that" plus "yes, but you didn't" leaving the identification of theatre to be the grey area that potentially unites the study of music/sound, and dance/movement.

Keeping with the notion of music as sound, dance as movement and that 'there is no theatre without a spectator' (Ranciere 2009:2) we then discover that division between the three disciplines ceases to exist as everything with an audience takes the form of theatre, with dance and music becoming the content. Finally we find that the previously elusive element of theatre is suddenly identified as the rhizome that 'connects any point to any other point' (Deleuze & Guattari 1999:21), however is theatre the only rhizome here? After all, is the relationship between performer and audience not also a type of collaboration?

If so, we start to see a pattern for collaboration emerging that puts the act in flux; collaboration has happened, is happening and will happen again.

Amalgamation

Transforming from a troupe of individual performers clashing together in the hope of creating something fathomable, to a union of interdisciplinary practitioners striving towards a consensus for performance through collaboration we discovered that the utilization of integrative collaboration fails to yield anything identifiable as music, theatre or dance; rather it takes the form of theatre with the content of music and dance.

Or perhaps this is more easily identified as contemporary performance?

I now observe, in retrospect, that our piece was not a complete thing but a collage devised of fragments, and that these fragments were not just pieces of inter-disciplinarity, but of collaboration.

As our ways of understanding the rain multiply, so too will we begin to see the presence of rain in even the driest of subjects. We will realize at last that our objective all along was to understand that it is always raining. (Goulish 2000:47)

It becomes clear to me now that we must view collaboration with the same eyes that Matthew Goulish sees rain; that it is almost an obligatory rhizome, constantly acting within and around art as an opportunity for growth. Goulish continues to talk about the necessity of collaboration for 'as a performer, I know that I have my own body and my own dreams and the bodies of others and the dreams of others. In order to continue, I need them all.' (Goulish 2000:85)

It is only now that we start to see collaboration as more than just a model for scientific and creative progression; we begin to see that collaboration, as something the humanist might say; could be the answer to an egalitarian existence.

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‘Perhaps the time has come to value the chaos and unfairness of collaborative practice, the cut and thrust, give and take, the absence of reliable rules, standards or processes. We cannot protect students from the brutality of living by arts practice or the cruelty of collaborations that don’t work. The point about swimming is you get wet. The point about collaboration is you may get hurt.’

(Christopher Newell)